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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 006051

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP, EAP/MLS, S/CT, INR

PACOM FOR FPA (HUSO)

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: SOUTHERN VIOLENCE: TWO SOLDIERS KILLED AFTER BEING HELD BY VILLAGERS

REF: BANGKOK 5706

Classified By: Political Counselor Susan M. Sutton. Reason 1.4(d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On September 21, A Thai Navy officer and Marine were beaten and stabbed to death in Narathiwat province after being held overnight by Muslim villagers. The soldiers, in plain clothes, had been sent to the village the previous evening to investigate a recent shooting incident. Villagers seized the pair and held them at a local mosque before they were killed. Thai security forces were able to recover the bodies without incident. The murders are another disturbing development in the ongoing violence and highlight the climate of fear that permeates the region. Further violence is expected as a consequence of the incident. END SUMMARY

12. (C) The following information is derived from a mixture of government, local, and news sources. It gives the story as we have it so far, but many details are still not clear: On September 20, at approximately 2000, there was a drive by shooting at a local tea shop in the Ra Ngae district of Narathiwat province. (NOTE: Press reports indicate that one person was killed, and four injured. However, a local contact told Emboffs that three people were killed and four injured in the incident. END NOTE) Following the shooting, a Thai Navy ensign and Marine sergeant in plain clothes, were sent to investigate the shooting. Villagers -- apparently seeing weapons in their vehicle and suspicious they might have been involved in the shooting -- seized the pair and moved them to a local mosque where they were held overnight.

13. (SBU) After they were moved to the mosque several hundred to several thousand villagers surrounded the mosque to prevent Thai security forces from freeing the soldiers (NOTE: A local source told Emboffs that there were approximately 200 villagers directly in front of the mosque and 1-2,000 in the surrounding area. END NOTE) Sometime during the afternoon on September 21 the sailor and marine were beaten and stabbed to death, despite government efforts to negotiate for their release. Following the murders, the villagers dispersed, allowing the military to recover the bodies.

14. (C) Post has been in touch with contacts in the security forces to express concern and urge a careful response. The Supreme Command assured us that they were aware of the need to handle this in a responsible manner.

15. (C) COMMENT: The apparent mob murders of the Thai sailor and marine is another disturbing incident in the long running conflict in Thailand's far south and has the potential to further inflame the situation. The incident highlights the climate of fear and suspicion that exist in the South, particularly in rural areas, created by daily incidents of violence that mostly go unexplained and unclaimed. We do not yet know who killed the soldiers, but it is clear that within this tense atmosphere the villagers could have easily been manipulated (or mobilized) to commit violence by those seeking to create instability in the South (reftel). Thai security forces have not as yet responded to the incident, but the circumstances of the murders are particularly galling and could provoke reprisals, feeding the ongoing cycle of violence in the region. END COMMENT

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